



Support Gender Equity in Education Amendments to Every Child Achieves Act (S.1177)

July 2, 2015

Dear Senator,

We are writing on behalf of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE), a nonprofit coalition of more than 40 organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for women and girls. NCWGE remains committed to eradicating barriers to equal educational opportunity and urges your support for the following issues which may be offered as amendments to Every Child Achieves Act (S.1177).

1. Reauthorize Support for Gender Equity Work in the States: Support Sen. Blumenthal's amendment to maintain support and technical assistance for Title IX implementation.

Since 1974, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has contained authorizing language for grants to states, districts, and schools to create safe and healthy learning environments for students regardless of gender. The Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), as passed out of the HELP Committee, would eliminate educational equity grants. Sen. Blumenthal's amendment maintains this important gender equity resource, needed to address issues such as sexual harassment and violence, access to athletic opportunities, access to STEM courses, discrimination against pregnant and parenting students, and other Title IX issues which are still prevalent.

2. Require Transparency: Support Sen. Warren's Amendment to Report Data that is "Cross-Tabulated" or Segmented by More Than One Subgroup.

We urge your support for Sen. Warren's amendment to require that data already reported by states on academic assessments and graduation rates be presented in a manner that is not only disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, English learner status, economically disadvantaged status, and migrant status, but also presented in a cross-sectional manner, e.g. by race and gender together, by race and disability together, etc. Without compromising student privacy or affecting accountability measures, this amendment would enhance the utility of the reported data, helping states, schools and communities to better target interventions by enabling them to take into account the ways in which the intersection of different categories like race, ethnicity, gender, and disability operate for both boys and girls in school.

3. Support Equity in School Athletics: Support Sen. Murray’s High School Sports Data Collection Amendment.

We urge you to support Sen. Murray’s amendment which will improve gender equity in interscholastic athletics and encourage compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Sen. Murray’s amendment would enact provisions from the High School Data Transparency Act (S. 217), a bill which has long had bipartisan support in both houses of Congress. It requires high schools to report basic data on the number of male and female students in their athletics programs and the expenditures made for their sports teams. Ensuring equal opportunities for girls in athletics is critical, as participation in athletics leads to better educational and employment outcomes, improved physical and mental health, and lower rates of sexual activity and unplanned pregnancy.

4. Increase Girls’ Participation in STEM: Support Sen. Gillibrand’s amendment to increase access to important STEM opportunities for girls.

While progress has been made over the last 40 years, girls and women are still vastly underrepresented in numerous STEM fields of study, particularly in computer science. Not only is increasing the participation of women and underrepresented minorities in these fields a civil rights imperative, but also it is critical to our country’s global competitiveness. More must be done to recognize and address barriers to the participation of women and girls in STEM fields and to encourage women and girls to enroll in and complete STEM programs. We therefore urge you to support Senator Gillibrand’s amendment to the ECAA, which will advance STEM opportunities for girls.

5. Ensure that States and School Districts Provide Opportunities for the Enrollment, Attendance, and Success of Expectant and Parenting Students: Support Senator Udall’s Expectant and Parenting Students Amendment.

We urge you to support Senator Udall’s amendment to require state and local education agencies to include expectant and parenting students among other vulnerable populations considered in their Title IA plans. This would prompt education officials to address the unique educational needs of these students, yet permit them to determine the accommodations appropriate to their education systems, their expectant and parenting youth student populations, and their community environments. Roughly one in four girls in the U.S. gets pregnant at least once before age 20, and because of the many barriers they face, pregnancy and parenting responsibilities significantly increase a student’s risk of dropping out of school. However, as Senator Udall’s amendment acknowledges, with the right support and encouragement from their schools, expectant and parenting students – and their children – can and do succeed.

6. Improve School Climate: Support Sen. Casey’s amendment to implement the goals of the Safe Schools Improvement Act and Sen. Franken’s amendment to implement the Student Non-Discrimination Act.

To be effective and improve student achievement, the ECAA must require schools to address threats to students’ physical and mental health and to create a positive school climate conducive to learning. Simply put, students cannot learn if they don’t feel safe. That is why we ask you to

support Sen. Casey's amendment which directs states to help districts and schools prevent and respond to bullying and harassment by adopting data collection and reporting requirements (regarding the incidence and prevalence of bullying and harassment and students' perceptions regarding such incidents and the school's responsiveness) and by adopting, disseminating, and implementing policies and procedures to prevent and address such conduct based on protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender identity. We also ask you to support Sen. Franken's amendment, which would prohibit all forms of discrimination in K-12 public schools based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, or a student's association with someone who is LGBT.

NCWGE appreciates the opportunity to provide input regarding the Every Child Achieves Act. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lisa Maatz at 202-785-7720 or Fatima Goss Graves at 202-588-5180.

Sincerely,

National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE)
American Association of University Women, Chair
National Women's Law Center, Vice-Chair
American Federation of Teachers, Treasurer

Center for Women Policy Studies
Champion Women
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Feminist Majority Foundation
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Healthy Teen Network
Legal Momentum
League of United Latin American Citizens
National Alliance for Partnership Equity
National Girls Collaborative Project
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Women's Political Caucus of California
Society of Women Engineers
Women's Law Project